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Second Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 1509 (2003) of 19 September 2003, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for a period of 12 months and requested me to report every 90 days on the implementation of its mandate. The present report covers developments since my report of 15 December 2003 (S/2003/1175).

II. Deployment of the Mission

2. The pace of troop deployment gathered momentum during the period under review with contingents from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ireland, Namibia and Pakistan arriving in Liberia. The three sector headquarters outside Monrovia, at Buchanan, Tubmanburg and Zwedru, have been fully established and the Mission's troop strength stood at 12,731 as at 9 March. Full deployment will be achieved by the end of March, with the exception of a construction engineer company and one infantry battalion, which will not be available until April.

3. On the whole, the deployment process has proceeded without major problems. However, on 25 December 2003, the movement of the first contingent of troops to deploy beyond Monrovia, while en route to Klay Junction, was stopped just outside the capital by elements of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). LURD leaders contended that UNMIL deployment should not take place until a dispute between them and the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, Charles Gyude Bryant, over the issue of the appointment of 84 assistant ministerial positions had been resolved. However, UNMIL insisted that there should be no linkage between the two issues, following which a Pakistani unit was deployed to Klay Junction on 27 December without further hindrance. UNMIL troops subsequently deployed to Gbarnga and Buchanan on 31 December 2003 and to Tapeta, Tubmanburg, Zwedru, Ganta and Nimba County in January 2004. On 22 February, LURD elements attempted to hinder deployment to Grand Cape Mount County for the same reasons cited above. However, following the intervention of UNMIL, the deployment went ahead as planned.

4. Despite this progress, UNMIL has still not deployed to some key areas of the country. These include central and northern Lofa and northern Nimba Counties,

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which will be covered by Pakistani and Bangladeshi troops scheduled to arrive by the end of March. An Ethiopian battalion, also scheduled to arrive this month, will be deployed in the south-east, covering Sinoe, River Cess, River Gee, Grand Kru and Maryland Counties, while a contingent from Senegal is expected to be deployed in areas bordering Côte d'Ivoire.

5. In mid-February, the Irish Special Forces unit and the logistics ship *Rotterdam* from the Netherlands completed their tour of duty with UNMIL, as planned, having provided important support to the Mission during the critical initial stages of the operation. UNMIL is currently planning for the coordinated realignment of operational responsibilities in the greater Monrovia area, sector 1, following the expected departure during the coming months of the contingents provided by Benin, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and Togo. The rotation schedule will be managed in a manner that ensures that there is no diminution in the capacity of the UNMIL force in the Monrovia area to respond to any security threats.

III. Implementation of the ceasefire agreement

6. During the period under review, there was general compliance with the ceasefire in Monrovia and in most parts of the country. Security in areas to which UNMIL has deployed has improved and the ban on the public display of arms in those areas is being respected by the armed groups. A number of minor ceasefire violations by all three armed groups were reported outside the capital. These included maintenance of illegal checkpoints and sporadic shooting incidents among LURD combatants on 11 and 16 January in Gbarnga and Voinjama respectively. The latter incidents were reportedly related to the leadership struggle within LURD. Several shots were also fired during a reported dispute between several members of the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) in Buchanan.

7. Furthermore, there have been reports of harassment of civilians, including extortion and looting by elements of all three armed factions. It is expected that the continuing deployment and consolidation of the UNMIL force throughout the country and progress in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process will result in a decrease in such incidents. At the same time, UNMIL continued to confiscate weapons, including during checkpoint and search-and-seizure operations.

IV. Activities of the Joint Monitoring Committee, the Implementation Monitoring Committee and the International Contact Group on Liberia

8. The Joint Monitoring Committee, which is chaired by the UNMIL Force Commander, held six meetings during the period under review. It has continued to be a valuable mechanism for monitoring the ceasefire, maintaining dialogue among the armed groups and facilitating contacts between UNMIL and the ground commanders of the three factions. Discussions have focused, in particular, on ceasefire violations, preparations for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and efforts to retrieve looted vehicles from the armed factions. UNMIL has continued to press for the submission by the armed factions of the lists of their

combatants, as well as their locations and military equipment, to facilitate the resumption of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process. In this regard, MODEL and the former Government of Liberia forces have indicated they are finalizing nominal lists, while LURD has yet to provide a response.

9. Another important mechanism for facilitating the peace process is the Implementation Monitoring Committee, which is chaired by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, signed on 18 August 2003 in Accra, the Implementation Monitoring Committee is charged with monitoring and ensuring faithful implementation of the Agreement. At its second meeting, held on 4 March in Monrovia, the Committee reviewed progress in the preparations for relaunching the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process and called upon the armed groups to expedite the submission of lists of their combatants and military equipment. It is widely felt that the effectiveness of the Committee could be further enhanced by including the faction leaders in its membership and by convening meetings more frequently.

10. UNMIL, ECOWAS and the International Contact Group on Liberia are also working closely to move the peace process forward. The Contact Group meets regularly in Monrovia. In a press statement issued following a high-level meeting in New York on 5 February, the Contact Group called upon all parties to refrain from any action that could jeopardize the work of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, to refrain from the politics of threats, intimidation and subversion and to turn to the politics of accommodation and dialogue. It also called upon the parties to cooperate fully in preparations for the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process.

V. Implementation of the peace process

11. The National Transitional Legislative Assembly has been meeting regularly and, as at 9 March, had held 39 plenary sessions. Of the 74 Assembly members 2 have yet to be inducted, 1 representing the All Liberian Coalition Party and another representing Grand Kru County. Also as at 9 March, the Legislative Assembly had completed the confirmation of nominees for 19 of the 23 ministerial positions in the National Transitional Government of Liberia, which were allocated to representatives of the signatories of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Since the inauguration of the Transitional Government on 14 October 2003, the cabinet has held only two meetings. On 7 March, the Chairman of the ECOWAS mediation team on Liberia, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, arrived in Monrovia, where he is expected to address the issue of the remaining vacant seats in the Legislative Assembly, among other outstanding problems regarding the peace process.

12. The issue of appointments to 84 assistant ministerial positions, which were not allocated under the Agreement, has continued to be the source of tension between some leaders of the armed factions and Chairman Bryant. As at early March, a list of 66 nominees had been submitted by the Transitional Government to the Transitional Legislative Assembly, but none had been formally confirmed. On 26 January Sekou Damate Conneh, the Chairman of LURD, and Thomas Yaya Nimely, the leader of MODEL and Foreign Minister in the Transitional Government, issued a statement

calling for Chairman Bryant's removal from office on the grounds that he had failed to proceed with making appointments to the posts. However, the leadership of MODEL and several LURD leaders subsequently disclaimed the statement.

13. In a related development, in late January Chairman Bryant appointed members of the National Elections Commission, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Independent Human Rights Commission. However, some parties have pointed out that the procedures followed in making those appointments were not in conformity with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which requires the Chairman to consult with the Transitional Legislative Assembly before deciding on the candidates. In this regard, my Special Representative wrote to Chairman Bryant on 28 January requesting that sufficient time be allowed for national consultations and the involvement of civil society before the establishment of the human rights institutions.

14. Meanwhile, the continuing dispute between Mr. Conneh and his wife, Aisha Keita Conneh, over the leadership of LURD has caused divisions within the group and threatens to fracture it into opposing factions. As indicated above (para. 6), the issue has led to shooting incidents between rival groups in the interior of the country; it has also contributed to tension between Chairman Bryant and the leadership of LURD. The dispute continues to be a destabilizing factor and a potentially serious threat to progress in implementing the peace agreement, particularly disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation. According to LURD sources, the problem was discussed at meetings attended by a number of senior LURD leaders in Conakry in early February, but was not resolved. Representatives of subregional and other international stakeholders in Monrovia, including UNMIL, ECOWAS and the International Contact Group on Liberia, are continuing reconciliatory efforts to help address the issue.

15. Concerning elections, the Security Council requested UNMIL to assist the Transitional Government, in conjunction with other international partners, in preparing for national elections. In this regard, the Secretariat is preparing to dispatch a needs-assessment mission to Liberia to consult with UNMIL, the Transitional Government, the National Elections Commission and other stakeholders on the role the United Nations could play in supporting the national elections, which are scheduled to take place in October 2005.

VI. Regional aspects

16. The Transitional Government and UNMIL have continued to explore ways of addressing regional dimensions of the conflict in Liberia. In this regard, Chairman Bryant attended the ECOWAS summit in Accra on 19 December 2003 and, during the period under review, visited Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone. These consultations have helped to improve relations between Liberia and its neighbours and garner support for the Liberian peace process. In addition, State visits to Guinea and Sierra Leone helped to revive cooperation among the Mano River Union countries and provided impetus to plans to hold a summit meeting in the coming months.

17. The UNMIL Force Commander met with his counterparts from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) in Abidjan on 13 February. Issues discussed included

military coordination in addressing cross-border activities that have caused and continue to foster conflicts in the subregion. My Special Representative for Liberia also met with counterparts from MINUCI, UNAMSIL, the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations Office in West Africa in Dakar from 18 to 21 February to review activities and coordinate measures to address cross-border issues, including the movement of combatants, the use of mercenaries, the circulation of small arms and the repatriation of foreign combatants.

18. In a press statement issued following its meeting on 5 February, the Contact Group urged all States in the subregion to support the implementation of the Peace Agreement, to prevent their territories from being used by armed elements to destabilize their neighbours and to strengthen subregional cooperation. It also emphasized the importance of a subregional approach to cross-border problems, particularly the cross-border flow of arms and fighters. It urged UNMIL, the Transitional Government and the leadership of the warring parties to contain all Liberian fighters within the territory of Liberia to enable the peace process in neighbouring countries to succeed.

VII. Preparations for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process

19. As noted in my report of 15 December 2003, a disarmament and demobilization exercise was launched on 7 December at a cantonment site at Camp Scheiffelin, on the outskirts of Monrovia. More than 12,000 combatants, largely former government soldiers and militias, presented themselves for disarmament, overwhelming the facilities. Problems also arose over misunderstandings concerning the benefits they were to receive. Disturbances caused by disgruntled elements ensued during the next three days at Camp Scheiffelin and in Monrovia. The situation improved after UNMIL met with the Defence Minister and the commanders of the former Government forces and provided the ex-combatants with an initial stipend after they had disarmed. The disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process was suspended on 17 December, and subsequently a review of operational aspects of the programme was carried out. At the time of suspension, 12,664 combatants had been disarmed, registered and given receipts as identification for their participation in the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration process, and 8,686 assorted weapons had been collected.

20. On 15 January 2004, UNMIL held a meeting with the faction commanders, the Transitional Government, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders, at which it was decided that the commencement of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme would be contingent on the following conditions being met: implementation of a sensitization campaign for combatants; provision by the three armed factions to UNMIL of lists of their combatants, locations and weapons; the establishment of cantonment sites with relevant services; and adequate deployment of UNMIL troops to provide security. At the same time, the Technical Coordination Committee of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Joint Implementation Unit was charged with accelerating the development of the operational aspects of the programme.

21. The UNMIL Public Information Unit has led an intensive disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation sensitization programme involving commanders from the three armed factions and representatives from the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, together with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. Information teams have carried out educational programmes at locations nationwide where concentrations of combatants from the three factions are located. It has also broadcast messages related to disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation on Radio UNMIL. The campaign has been instrumental in providing information on the process to the combatants. In addition, it has helped not only to build public understanding of the role of the entire United Nations family in Liberia in support of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, but also to focus on the need for reconciliation and forgiveness by the families and communities that will receive demobilized ex-combatants. It has further helped in calming anxieties created by the pause in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme and in rebuilding support for and understanding of the process. A substantial number of weapons and ammunition have been collected during the sensitization campaign. At symbolic ceremonies in Gbarnga and Tubmanburg in early February, Mr. Conneh handed over a number of weapons and urged LURD combatants to participate in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme.

22. The Technical Coordination Committee has completed the operational plans for the disarmament and demobilization process and has also identified the disarmament and cantonment sites in conjunction with the UNMIL force. Two non-governmental organizations, the Lutheran World Federation and Readcorp, are constructing the first four cantonment sites, in Monrovia, Tubmanburg, Gbarnga and Buchanan. Disarmed former combatants are being used to build the camps. The construction of the sites is expected to be completed in late March. Furthermore, it is expected that by the end of March, UNMIL deployments would have reached the critical mass needed to provide adequate security for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process. It is therefore envisaged that at that time the Mission, in consultation with all stakeholders, will be able to determine a date for the resumption of the process. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is playing a leading role in preparations that are under way for the rehabilitation and reintegration elements of the process.

23. To help meet their needs for humanitarian assistance, the Government has arranged for a distribution of rice to combatants. UNMIL has provided logistical assistance, and in recent weeks around 2,000 bags of rice have been delivered to the combatants through the sector commanders, in cooperation with the local faction leaders. It is hoped that this will reduce incidents of food looting and extortion by armed elements. However, the programme will likely need to continue, as the cantonment process takes several months.

24. As of 5 March, pledges amounting to $11.3 million had been made to the UNDP Trust Fund for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation, of which some $8 million had been received. Some $5 million has been earmarked for projects, including camp management, food management, pre-discharge orientations, medical screening and transport of combatants. It is expected that those funds will be depleted by the end of June 2004. Therefore, additional resources are

urgently needed to fund the demobilization process, as well as social and economic reintegration opportunities for ex-combatants.

VIII. Support for security sector reform

25. In its resolution 1509 (2003), the Security Council mandated UNMIL to assist the Transitional Government in monitoring and restructuring the police force of Liberia, to develop a civilian police training programme and to assist in their training, as well as to assist the Transitional Government in the formation of a new and restructured Liberian military, in cooperation with ECOWAS, international organizations and other interested States. As at 9 March, the UNMIL civilian police component comprised 518 personnel, including 278 civilian police officers and two formed police units of 120 each. A third formed police unit is expected to be deployed in April. On 8 March, civilian police co-location teams began deploying to Tubmanburg, Buchanan, Gbarnga and Zwedru. Further deployments of police trainers and advisers will take place in a phased manner, as dictated by the needs on the ground and the ongoing team assessments.

26. Since the civilian police component began its programme of co-location with the Liberian National Police on 15 December, it has completed around 2,000 shifts with national counterparts. Major tasks have included responding to calls, investigating crimes and attending crime scenes, demonstrating respect for human rights, administering police records and doing community policing. The civilian police component is also working to re-establish police services in areas where police were forced to leave because of the civil conflict. In this regard, the Bushrod Island Central Police Station, which is located in a densely populated neighbourhood of Monrovia and which is in dire need of community policing, has been chosen as a model station to benefit from funding from UNMIL quick-impact projects.

27. A joint crime prevention patrol programme, entitled "Operation Restore Calm", was launched on 15 December, and as at 19 February 265 joint patrols had been undertaken. Meanwhile, 186 joint task force patrols backed by armed formed police unit officers had been deployed to localities in Monrovia identified as being particularly plagued by violent crimes. The civilian police component has been instrumental in creating an emergency response "dial 911" system, which has been used successfully in preventing mob violence. It has also conducted joint investigations with the Liberian National Police of serious criminal acts, such as serial rapes and multiple murders. In this connection, the Liberian National Police has established a crime reporting system designed by the UNMIL civilian police component.

28. On 12 January, UNMIL launched a training programme for a Liberian interim police force of 400 officers, which will perform policing functions in Monrovia pending the formation of a new, restructured Liberian national police force. By 5 March, 178 officers had completed the course and 74 were enrolled in the programme, which is expected to be completed by April. Planning for the selection, vetting and training of the new Liberian police force is under way. A Rule of Law Implementation Committee comprising representatives of UNMIL and the Transitional Government will be established to select suitable candidates for the new police force. In line with established registration, vetting and selection policies, the

civilian police component is currently registering law enforcement officers while assisting and assessing the Liberian security agencies. By 9 March, 1,474 Liberian National Police officers and 1,187 Special Security Service officers had been registered. An assessment of the short- and longer-term needs, essential to developing the future police service in Liberia, is currently under way and will be presented to donors.

29. The correctional system in Liberia is substandard and is facing numerous problems, including insufficient prison facilities, an inadequate inmate tracking system that hinders expeditious processing and judicial dispositions and a lack of security and resources. The civilian police component is consulting with the Ministry of Justice and also with the International Committee of the Red Cross on ways to improve conditions. Corrections personnel are working with government counterparts to reopen the Central Monrovia Prison, including through the development of a training needs analysis and a training programme for prison staff and by writing policies and procedures for the management of the prison.

30. Currently, only a few of Liberia's courts are functioning. The judicial component and the human rights and protection component, together with UNDP, are working with the Chief Justice and the Ministry of Justice to address problems relating to rehabilitating and equipping the court system. In this regard, the focus is on the rehabilitation of Monrovia's criminal and other courts, to be followed by the rehabilitation of courts throughout the country.

IX. Restoration of the authority of the State

31. UNMIL is currently assisting the Transitional Government as it prepares to re-establish State authority throughout the country. Some progress was made by the Transitional Government in recent months in meeting the civil servants' salary arrears. However, most ministries still lack operational facilities after having been looted during the fighting in Monrovia last year. UNMIL is assisting ministries and other government institutions to develop plans for restructuring and enhancing their operational capacities and for restoring civil administration in the interior of the country. In this regard, UNMIL is working closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs in drawing up strategies for restoring local administration in the interior when security conditions permit. UNDP has established a trust fund to support related capacity-building activities.

32. The civil affairs component has made assessment visits to local authorities in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, Margibi, Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties. The infrastructure of most local authorities' headquarters has been destroyed and their operations are limited. Furthermore, most of the government-appointed local officials were forced to flee to Monrovia during the conflict. In numerous cases, the armed factions have replaced them with their own representatives, many of whom appear reluctant to step down. UNMIL is working closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs on resolving this issue to ensure that Government-appointed administrators are put in place.

33. UNMIL civil affairs officers are also involved in resolving disputes in several locations over the restitution of illegally occupied dwellings and land to the rightful owners. This problem is mounting, as increasing numbers of displaced persons are returning to their home communities. UNMIL civil affairs officers are also

consulting with local communities in accessible counties on identifying priority projects for support by quick-impact projects.

34. The human rights and protection component is working with the Gender Unit in building the capacity of the Ministry of Gender and Development, including by training the Ministry's staff in both Monrovia and the interior on running gender-sensitive programmes, and in other areas of operational skills enhancement. The Gender Unit is distributing informational posters on key gender concerns throughout the country.

35. Under Security Council resolution 1509 (2003), UNMIL is to assist the Transitional Government in restoring the proper administration of natural resources. The recruitment of qualified personnel, who will undertake the planning and implement such assistance, is expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

X. Public information

36. The public information component of the Mission is playing a vital role in promoting the peace process by communicating relevant messages to the population through UNMIL Radio, working with the local and international media and conducting community outreach by utilizing traditional means of communication as well as theatre groups, cartoon handbills and flyers. As noted above (para. 21), the component is playing a leading role in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation sensitization process. UNMIL Radio, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, has the widest reach of any station in the country, with its signal reaching west to Tubmanburg, east to Buchanan and north to Kakata. Combatants in those locations indicate that they rely on UNMIL Radio for information on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation.

XI. Human rights and protection of civilians

37. Liberia continues to face a human rights crisis. While the security situation has improved nationwide with the ongoing deployment of peacekeepers, serious problems remain owing to the widespread absence of civil authority. There have been isolated cases of attacks on civilians, including killings, torture, rape, harassment, looting, extortion, forced labour and restrictions on freedom of movement and personal liberty by elements associated with the armed factions. Most of the abuses and violations have taken place in isolated areas where peacekeepers have not been deployed. However, dealing with perpetrators in areas of military deployment also remains a serious challenge in the absence of police or other civil authorities.

38. The human rights and protection component has assisted the Transitional Government in preparing draft legislation for the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which will be sent to the Government for consideration and is expected to form the basis for a national consultation process. The United Nations/World Bank joint needs assessment report on Liberia, published in February 2004 and covering the period up to October 2005, included information on assistance provided to human rights institutions such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Independent Human Rights Commission. UNMIL is continuing

to work with the Transitional Government to ensure that the establishment of those Commissions follows the best international practice and that the relevant enabling legislation complies with established international standards.

39. Liberia has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol on individual petitions, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. However, the instruments of ratification of the treaties have not yet been transmitted to the United Nations. On 31 January, my Special Representative wrote to Chairman Bryant requesting his intervention in ensuring that they are finalized and deposited accordingly. Discussions are continuing with the Transitional Government on a draft human rights declaration, which was transmitted by UNMIL for the consideration of Chairman Bryant in October 2003.

40. The UNMIL human rights component continues to provide human rights training for non-governmental organizations and also for the interim Liberian National Police under the programme organized by the civilian police component and is carrying out activities to raise public awareness. Additionally, UNMIL, in collaboration with UNDP, has continued to update its database on war-related serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, including information on perpetrators, victims and eyewitnesses.

XII. Humanitarian situation

41. With the deployment of UNMIL outside of Monrovia, humanitarian access to vulnerable populations in the interior of the country has improved. The humanitarian agencies have conducted short-term assessments, including in and around Gbarnga, Tubmanburg, Buchanan, Voinjama, Harper and Zwedru. About 12,000 refugees from neighbouring countries have returned home spontaneously and have crossed Liberia's western border. Those returns have not been organized or assisted and have raised protection concerns given the uncertain security situation in some parts of the country where UNMIL deployment is still incomplete. However, it does indicate that a new sense of confidence in the Liberian peace process is spreading throughout the subregion. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has registered 3,000 returnees to whom the World Food Programme (WFP) has provided relief items and food upon arrival. UNHCR is leading the overall programme for the eventual return and resettlement of refugees and other displaced persons under an inter-agency committee jointly chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission.

42. The humanitarian situation in the camps for internally displaced persons around Monrovia and its neighbouring counties, hosting some 250,000 people, continues to be dire. Between November 2003 and January 2004, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations relocated approximately 25,000 internally displaced persons from irregular shelters in central Monrovia back to their homes in the city or to recognized camps. An estimated 10,000 internally displaced persons have also spontaneously returned from camps to areas that are relatively accessible, such as Bomi, Bong, Margibi and Grand Cape Mount Counties.

43. For returnees, refugees and internally displaced persons alike, the challenges faced in their home communities are multifaceted. Shelters and houses have been

destroyed, roads are in poor condition and local institutions that organize service delivery are generally non-existent. A primary concern for the returnees is having the capacity to produce their own food. The returnees hope to seize upon a window of opportunity for planting, which exists until the onset of the rains around May. Thus, seeds, tools and other agricultural inputs must be supplied to them before that date. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its partner non-governmental organizations are endeavouring to meet this challenge and have begun providing seeds and tools to residents in Bong, Margibi and Montserrado Counties. The World Health Organization has provided medicines to the UNMIL military component for the provision of medical assistance in towns where health services have yet to be re-established. WFP is also planning to extend its food assistance programme to communities in the seven newly accessed counties.

44. As security is restored and returns increase, the focus for humanitarian coordination will shift increasingly from Monrovia to the rural areas. It is expected that offices of United Nations agencies will become operational in the coming weeks in the four designated humanitarian hubs at Gbarnga, Voinjama, Zwedru and Harper.

45. Vulnerability analysis and mapping surveys have been carried out to strengthen the information base of United Nations agencies and to assist in targeting and prioritizing assistance to beneficiaries. Such surveys have identified vulnerable groups lacking access to food, water and health and educational services. It is estimated in the consolidated appeal launched in November 2003 that by the end of 2004, an estimated 350,000 internally displaced persons, some 15,000 refugees from Sierra Leone, over 150,000 returnees, 350,000 schoolchildren and other vulnerable groups will have been provided with assistance. Ex-combatants and host communities affected by the war will also benefit from food aid to assist rehabilitation and reintegration into local communities.

XIII. National recovery

46. By early March 2004, UNMIL had undertaken over 50 quick-impact projects in Monrovia utilizing local contractors, including the removal of garbage from the streets, the rehabilitation of roads and the installation of lights on a number of streets. It has also provided support for the renovation of just over 20 primary, secondary and vocational schools and the construction of an interim care centre for former child soldiers. A further 45 projects are currently under review, mainly in the education, health, water and sanitation areas. UNDP and the World Bank are working closely in formulating a community-driven development programme to support social and economic recovery from conflict.

47. In Monrovia and nearby accessible counties, recovery and rehabilitation programmes are already slowly transforming the life of civilians. The back-to-school campaign, led by the United Nations Children's Fund and supported by several United Nations agencies, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, is revitalizing education. Thousands of teachers have been trained and a teachers' guide has been published. By mid-March, around 7,600 "school-in-a-box" kits had been distributed providing school supplies for around 577,000 children.

48. The Transitional Government, and in particular Chairman Bryant, played a very active role, together with the United Nations, the World Bank, donors and other partners, in undertaking an ambitious and comprehensive assessment in late 2003 of

Liberia's reconstruction needs. This led to the elaboration of the results-focused transition framework, which covers 9 thematic clusters, 13 sectors and 7 cross-cutting themes. It addresses Liberia's short- to medium-term reconstruction and development needs and goals and was the basis for the deliberations at the International Reconstruction Conference for Liberia, held at United Nations Headquarters on 5 and 6 February. An important element in the production of the framework has been the strong national ownership of the process. Pledges made at the conference towards the relief and reconstruction needs of the country totalled $522 million. The results-focused transition framework is complementary to the 2004 consolidated appeal for humanitarian activities in Liberia, launched in November 2003. Adequately addressing the multifaceted humanitarian problems in the upcoming months will be essential in laying a sound foundation for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country.

49. Building on the success of the reconstruction conference, the Transitional Government, the United Nations, donors and other partners are working to expeditiously establish a management and coordination mechanism to ensure the timely fulfilment of the results-focused transition framework. The mechanism will be utilized to ensure the effective and transparent utilization of donor resources pledged during the conference and to ensure close coordination between the Government and its partners in the reconstruction process.

XIV. Mission support

50. In view of the current acute shortage of office space in Liberia, especially in Monrovia, the Mission is presently making use of prefabricated containers as a temporary measure. Meanwhile, negotiations are continuing for a permanent headquarters building in the capital that would house all components of the Mission. Work is continuing on the erection of offices and the rehabilitation of existing structures to accommodate civilian staff who will be working in the sectors.

51. As at 2 March, 223 international civilian staff had been deployed to Liberia, with a further 51 in travel status and 54 under recruitment. The total number of international civilian posts is 607.

XV. Financial aspects

52. By its resolution 58/261 of 23 December 2003, the General Assembly appropriated the amount of $564,494,300 (gross) and decided to apportion among Member States the amount of $450 million (gross) for UNMIL for the period from 1 August 2003 to 30 June 2004.

53. As at 31 January 2004, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNMIL Special Account amounted to $441.6 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $2.2 billion.

XVI. Observations

54. Notwithstanding the difficulties encountered in launching the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, significant progress has

been made in the past three months towards improving security in the country, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance and implementing the peace process. The deployment of the UNMIL force to the sector headquarters at Buchanan, Tubmanburg and Zwedru and other sites within the four sectors, as well as the increase in air and road patrols, has greatly increased the Mission's capacity to consolidate stability in the interior of the country. The completion of force deployment in the upcoming weeks across the country should further improve security, as well as facilitate the assignment of more UNMIL civilian and United Nations agency staff to areas outside the capital, assist in the extension of State authority, improve the free circulation of people and allow for the resumption of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process. The activities of the civilian police component have also resulted in an improvement in the law and order situation. The chalienges now are to deploy civilian police in the interior and to begin the process of restructuring the Liberian National Police.

55. The National Transitional Government of Liberia and the National Transitional Legislative Assembly have made commendable progress in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, despite the resource constraints that they face. However, much remains to be done to ensure that the path towards peace, stabilization and reconciliation becomes irreversible. The concerted and committed efforts of all the Liberian parties are essential. I would like to emphasize the need for the parties to work together constructively and to refrain from any actions that may jeopardize the functioning of the Transitional Government.

56. A step that needs to be taken immediately by the armed factions is the submission to UNMIL, without further delay, of the lists of combatants, their locations and their weapons, which are needed for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process to begin. I would further urge the leaders and senior commanders of the armed groups to cooperate fully with UNMIL to ensure that their combatants are well-informed about the programme so that it can proceed in a well-ordered manner. I would like to encourage donors to urgently consider providing further resources for the UNDP trust fund for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation to ensure that all elements of the process are adequately funded. The success of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, in particular the provision of bridging programmes and longer-term reintegration opportunities, will underpin efforts to restore durable peace.

57. I am very pleased to note the generous response of donors at the International Reconstruction Conference on Liberia, held in February. It is important to build upon the momentum generated by the Conference so that the process of meeting the reconstruction and rehabilitation needs of the country identified in the results-focused transition framework gets under way as soon as possible. In that connection, I welcome the follow-up steps being undertaken, led by the Transitional Government with the support of its international and national partners.

58. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the country continues to face a humanitarian crisis that needs immediate attention. One pressing issue in this regard is the need for assistance for the return of tens of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons to their home communities. The consolidated appeal for humanitarian needs remains underfunded, and I would appeal to donors to provide additional resources. A concerted emergency humanitarian intervention in the

coming months will be vital for laying a sound foundation for the proposed reconstruction initiatives.

59. There are still many difficult challenges that require careful management, including the resumption of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, the continued engagement of the armed groups in the political process and addressing the many cross-border issues that remain a potential source of renewed instability, not only for Liberia, but also for its neighbours. In this connection, a more active, central role for the Implementation Monitoring Committee will be essential in the upcoming months in facilitating dialogue among the Liberian parties and helping to overcome any obstacles to the peace process. Furthermore, the United Nations will continue to spearhead efforts, through consultations among its peacekeeping presences, United Nations agencies, concerned Governments and other partners, to develop a concerted subregional approach regarding the cross-border issues that are causes of instability and insecurity in the Mano River Union countries, Côte d'Ivoire and within the larger West African subregion.

60. In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Jacques Paul Klein, and the civilian and military staff of UNMIL for their contribution towards the restoration of peace and stability in Liberia. I would also like to express my appreciation to ECOWAS, members of the International Contact Group on Liberia, United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations for their tireless efforts to help the Liberian people chart a new and more promising future in conditions of peace and security.